

THE EARTHLY PARADISE
IN TWELVE PARTS

THE EARTHLY
PARADISE: A POEM
BY WILLIAM MORRIS

PART VI

PYGMALION AND THE IMAGE

OGIER THE DANE

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AUGUST

ACROSS the gap made by our English hinds,
Amidst the Roman's handiwork, behold
Far off the long-roofed church ; the shepherd binds
The withy round the hurdles of his fold ;
Down in the foss the river fed of old,
That through long lapse of time has grown to be
The little grassy valley that you see.

Rest here awhile, not yet the eve is still,
The bees are wandering yet, and you may hear
The barley mowers on the trenchéd hill,
The sheep-bells, and the restless changing weir,
All little sounds made musical and clear
Beneath the sky that burning August gives,
While yet the thought of glorious Summer lives.

Ah, love ! such happy days, such days as these,
Must we still waste them, craving for the best,
Like lovers o'er the painted images
Of those who once their yearning hearts have blessed ?
Have we been happy on our day of rest ?
Thine eyes say "yes,"—but if it came again,
Perchance its ending would not seem so vain.

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

NOW came fulfilment of the year's desire,
The tall wheat, coloured by the August fire
Grew heavy-headed, dreading its decay,
And blacker grew the elm-trees day by day.
About the edges of the yellow corn,
And o'er the gardens grown somewhat outworn,
The bees went hurrying to fill up their store ;
The apple-boughs bent over more and more ;
With peach and apricot the garden wall
Was odorous, and the pears began to fall
From off the high tree with each freshening breeze.

So in a house bordered about with trees,
A little raised above the waving gold
The Wanderers heard this marvellous story told,
While 'twixt the gleaming flasks of ancient wine,
They watched the reapers' slow advancing line.

PYGMALION AND THE IMAGE

ARGUMENT

A MAN of Cyprus, a sculptor named Pygmalion, made an image of a woman, fairer than any that had yet been seen, and in the end came to love his own handiwork as though it had been alive: wherefore, praying to Venus for help, he obtained his end, for she made the image alive indeed, and a woman, and Pygmalion wedded her.

AT Amathus, that from the southern side
Of Cyprus, looks across the Syrian sea,
There did in ancient time a man abide
Known to the island-dwellers, for that he
Had wrought most godlike works in imagery,
And day by day still greater honour won,
Which man our old books call Pygmalion.

Yet in the praise of men small joy he had,
But walked abroad with downcast brooding face,
Nor yet by any damsel was made glad;
For, sooth to say, the women of that place
Must seem to all men an accursed race,
Who with the Turner of all Hearts once strove
And now their hearts must carry lust for love.

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

Upon a day it chanced that he had been
About the streets, and on the crowded quays,
Rich with unopened wealth of bales, had seen
The dark-eyed merchants of the southern seas
In chaffer with the base Propœtides,
And heavy-hearted gat him home again,
His once-loved life grown idle, poor, and vain.

And there upon his images he cast
His weary eyes, yet little noted them,
As still from name to name his swift thought passed.
For what to him was Juno's well-wrought hem,
Diana's shaft, or Pallas' olive-stem?
What help could Hermes' rod unto him give,
Until with shadowy things he came to live?

Yet note, that though, while looking on the sun,
The craftsman o'er his work some morn of spring
May chide his useless labour never done,
For all his murmurs, with no other thing
He soothes his heart, and dulls thought's poisonous sting,
And thus in thought's despite the world goes on;
And so it was with this Pygmalion.

Unto the chisel must he set his hand,
And slowly, still in troubled thought must pace,
About a work begun, that there doth stand,
And still returning to the self-same place,
Unto the image now must set his face,
And with a sigh his wonted toil begin,
Half-loathed, half-loved, a little rest to win.

PYGMALION AND THE IMAGE

The lessening marble that he worked upon,
A woman's form now imaged doubtfully,
And in such guise the work had he begun,
Because when he the untouched block did see
In wandering veins that form there seemed to be,
Whereon he cried out in a careless mood,
"O lady Venus, make this presage good !

"And then this block of stone shall be thy maid,
And, not without rich golden ornament,
Shall bide within thy quivering myrtle-shade."
So spoke he, but the goddess, well content,
Unto his hand such godlike mastery sent,
That like the first artificer he wrought,
Who made the gift that woe to all men brought.

And yet, but such as he was wont to do,
At first indeed that work divine he deemed,
And as the white chips from the chisel flew
Of other matters languidly he dreamed,
For easy to his hand that labour seemed,
And he was stirred with many a troubling thought
And many a doubt perplexed him as he wrought.

And yet, again, at last there came a day
When smoother and more shapely grew the stone,
And he, grown eager, put all thought away,
But that which touched his craftsmanship alone,
And he would gaze at what his hands had done,
Until his heart with boundless joy would swell
That all was wrought so wonderfully well.

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

Yet long it was ere he was satisfied,
And with the pride that by his mastery
This thing was done, whose equal far and wide
In no town of the world a man could see,
Came burning longing that the work should be
E'en better still, and to his heart there came
A strange and strong desire he could not name.

The night seemed long, and long the twilight seemed,
A vain thing seemed his flowery garden fair;
Though through the night still of his work he dreamed,
And though his smooth-stemmed trees so nigh it were,
That thence he could behold the marble hair;
Nought was enough, until with steel in hand
He came before the wondrous stone to stand.

No song could charm him, and no histories
Of men's misdoings could avail him now,
Nay, scarcely seaward had he turned his eyes,
If men had said, "The fierce Tyrrhenians row
Up through the bay, rise up and strike a blow
For life and goods;" for nought to him seemed dear
But to his well-loved work to be anear.

Then vexed he grew, and knowing not his heart,
Unto himself he said, "Ah, what is this,
That I who oft was happy to depart,
And wander where the boughs each other kiss
'Neath the west wind, now have no other bliss
But in vain smoothing of this marble maid,
Whose chips this month a drachma had outweighed?"

PYGMALION AND THE IMAGE

“Lo I will get me to the woods and try
If I my woodcraft have forgotten quite,
And then, returning, lay this folly by,
And eat my fill, and sleep my sleep anight,
And 'gin to carve a Hercules aright
Upon the morrow, and perchance indeed
The Theban will be good to me at need.”

With that he took his quiver and his bow,
And through the gates of Amathus he went,
And toward the mountain slopes began to go,
Within the woods to work out his intent.
Fair was the day, the honied beanfield's scent
The west wind bore unto him ; o'er the way
The glittering noisy poplar leaves did play.

All things were moving ; as his hurried feet
Passed by, within the flowery swathe he heard
The sweeping of the scythe, the swallow fleet
Rose over him, the sitting partridge stirred
On the field's edge ; the brown bee by him whirred,
Or murmured in the clover flowers below.
But he with bowed-down head failed not to go.

At last he stopped, and, looking round, he said,
“Like one whose thirtieth year is well gone by,
The day is getting ready to be dead ;
No rest, and on the border of the sky
Already the great banks of dark haze lie ;
No rest—what do I midst this stir and noise ?
What part have I in these unthinking joys ?”

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

With that he turned, and toward the city-gate
Through the sweet fields went swifter than he came,
And cast his heart into the hands of fate ;
Nor strove with it, when higher 'gan to flame
That strange and strong desire without a name ;
Till panting, thinking of nought else, once more
His hand was on the latch of his own door.

One moment there he lingered, as he said,
" Alas ! what should I do if she were gone ? "
But even with that word his brow waxed red
To hear his own lips name a thing of stone,
As though the gods some marvel there had done,
And made his work alive ; and therewithal
In turn great pallor on his face did fall.

But with a sigh he passed into the house,
Yet even then his chamber-door must hold,
And listen there, half blind and timorous,
Until his heart should wax a little bold ;
Then entering, motionless and white and cold,
He saw the image stand amidst the floor
All whitened now by labour done before.

Blinded with tears, his chisel up he caught,
And, drawing near, and sighing, tenderly
Upon the marvel of the face he wrought,
E'en as he used to pass the long days by ;
But his sighs changed to sobbing presently,
And on the floor the useless steel he flung,
And, weeping loud, about the image clung.

PYGMALION AND THE IMAGE

“Alas !” he cried, “why have I made thee then,
That thus thou mockest me? I know indeed
That many such as thou art loved of men,
Whose passionate eyes poor wretches still will lead
Into their net, and smile to see them bleed ;
But these the gods made, and this hand made thee
Who wilt not speak one little word to me.”

Then from the image did he draw aback
To gaze on it through tears : and you had said,
Regarding it, that little did it lack
To be a living and most lovely maid ;
Naked it was, its unbound locks were laid
Over the lovely shoulders ; with one hand
Reached out, as to a lover, did it stand,

The other held a fair rose over-blown ;
No smile was on the parted lips, the eyes
Seemed as if even now great love had shown
Unto them, something of its sweet surprise,
Yet saddened them with half-seen mysteries,
And still midst passion maiden-like she seemed,
As though of love unchanged for aye she dreamed.

Reproachfully beholding all her grace,
Pygmalion stood, until he grew dry-eyed,
And then at last he turned away his face
As if from her cold eyes his grief to hide ;
And thus a weary while did he abide,
With nothing in his heart but vain desire,
The ever-burning, unconsuming fire.

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

But when again he turned his visage round
His eyes were brighter and no more he wept,
As if some little solace he had found,
Although his folly none the more had slept,
Rather some new-born god-sent madness kept
His other madness from destroying him,
And made the hope of death wax faint and dim ;

For, trembling and ashamed, from out the street
Strong men he called, and faint with jealousy
He caused them bear the ponderous, moveless feet
Unto the chamber where he used to lie,
So in a fair niche to his bed anigh,
Unwitting of his woe, they set it down,
Then went their ways beneath his troubled frown.

Then to his treasury he went, and sought
Fair gems for its adornment, but all there
Seemed to his eager eyes but poor and nought,
Not worthy e'en to touch her rippled hair.
So he, departing, through the streets 'gan fare,
And from the merchants at a mighty cost
Bought gems that kings for no good deed had lost.

These then he hung her senseless neck around,
Set on her fingers, and fair arms of stone,
Then cast himself before her on the ground,
Praying for grace for all that he had done
In leaving her untended and alone ;
And still with every hour his madness grew
Though all his folly in his heart he knew.

PYGMALION AND THE IMAGE

At last asleep before her feet he lay,
Worn out with passion, yet this burning pain
Returned on him, when with the light of day.
He woke and wept before her feet again ;
Then of the fresh and new-born morning fain,
Into his garden passed, and therefrom bore
New spoil of flowers his love to lay before.

A little altar, with fine gold o'erlaid,
Was in his house, that he a while ago
At some great man's command had deftly made,
And this he now must take and set below
Her well-wrought feet, and there must red flame glow
About sweet wood, and he must send her thence
The odour of Arabian frankincense.

Then as the smoke went up, he prayed and said,
"Thou, image, hear'st me not, nor wilt thou speak,
But I perchance shall know when I am dead,
If this has been some goddess' sport, to seek
A wretch, and in his heart infirm and weak
'To set her glorious image, so that he,
Loving the form of immortality,

"May make much laughter for the gods above :
Hear me, and if my love misliketh thee.
Then take my life away, for I will love
Till death unfear'd at last shall come to me,
And give me rest, if he of might may be
To slay the love of that which cannot die,
The heavenly beauty that can ne'er pass by."

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

No word indeed the moveless image said,
But with the sweet grave eyes his hands had wrought
Still gazed down on his bowed imploring head,
Yet his own words some solace to him brought,
Gilding the net wherein his soul was caught
With something like to hope, and all that day
Some tender words he ever found to say ;

And still he felt as something heard him speak ;
Sometimes he praised her beauty, and sometimes
Reproached her in a feeble voice and weak,
And at the last drew forth a book of rhymes,
Wherein were writ the tales of many climes,
And read aloud the sweetness hid therein
Of lovers' sorrows and their tangled sin.

And when the sun went down, the frankincense
Again upon the altar-flame he cast
That through the open window floating thence
O'er the fresh odours of the garden passed ;
And so another day was gone at last,
And he no more his love-lorn watch could keep,
But now for utter weariness must sleep.

But in the night he dreamed that she was gone,
And knowing that he dreamed, tried hard to wake
And could not, but forsaken and alone
He seemed to weep as though his heart would break,
And when the night her sleepy veil did take
From off the world, waking, his tears he found
Still wet upon the pillow all around.

PYGMALION AND THE IMAGE

Then at the first, bewildered by those tears,
He fell a-wondering wherefore he had wept,
But suddenly remembering all his fears,
Panting with terror, from the bed he leapt,
But still its wonted place the image kept,
Nor moved for all the joyful ecstasy
Wherewith he blessed the day that showed it nigh.

Then came the morning offering and the day,
Midst flowers and words of love and kisses sweet
From morn, through noon, to evening passed away,
And scarce unhappy, crouching at her feet
He saw the sun descend the sea to meet ;
And scarce unhappy through the darkness crept
Unto his bed, and midst soft dreaming slept.

BUT the next morn, e'en while the incense-smoke
At sun-rising curled round about her head,
Sweet sound of songs the wonted quiet broke
Down in the street, and he by something led,
He knew not what, must leave his prayer unsaid,
And through the freshness of the morn must see
The folk who went with that sweet minstrelsy ;

Damsels and youths in wonderful attire,
And in their midst upon a car of gold
An image of the Mother of Desire,
Wrought by his hands in days that seemed grown old
Though those sweet limbs a garment did enfold,

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

Coloured like flame, enwrought with precious things,
Most fit to be the prize of striving kings.

Then he remembered that the manner was
That fair-clad priests the lovely Queen should take
Thrice in the year, and through the city pass,
And with sweet songs the dreaming folk awake ;
And through the clouds a light there seemed to break
When he remembered all the tales well told
About her glorious kindly deeds of old.

So his unfinished prayer he finished not,
But, kneeling, once more kissed the marble feet,
And, while his heart with many thoughts waxed hot,
He clad himself with fresh attire and meet
For that bright service, and with blossoms sweet
Entwined with tender leaves he crowned his head,
And followed after as the goddess led.

But long and vain unto him seemed the way
Until they came unto her house again ;
Long years, the while they went about to lay
The honey-hiding dwellers on the plain,
The sweet companions of the yellowing grain
Upon her golden altar ; long and long
Before, at end of their delicious song,

They stripped her of her weed with reverend hands
And showed the ivory limbs his hands had wrought ;
Yea, and too long e'en then ere those fair bands,
Dispersing here and there, the shadow sought

PYGMALION AND THE IMAGE

Of Indian spice-trees o'er the warm sea brought
And toward the splashing of the fountain turned,
Mocked the noon sun that o'er the cloisters burned.

But when the crowd of worshippers was gone
And through the golden dimness of the place
The goddess' very servants paced alone,
Or some lone damsel murmured of her case
Apart from prying eyes, he turned his face
Unto that image made with toil and care,
In days when unto him it seemed most fair.

Dusky and dim, though rich with gems and gold,
The house of Venus was ; high in the dome
The burning sun-light you could now behold,
From nowhere else the light of day might come,
To shame the Shame-faced Mother's lovely home ;
A long way off the shrine, the fresh sea-breeze,
Now just arising, brushed the myrtle-trees.

The torches of the flower-crowned, singing band
Erewhile, indeed, made more than daylight there,
Lighting the painted tales of many a land,
And carven heroes, with their unused glare ;
But now a few soft, glimmering lamps there were
And on the altar a thin, flickering flame
Just showed the golden letters of her name.

Blue in the dome yet hung the incense-cloud,
And still its perfume lingered all around ;
And, trodden by the light-foot, fervent crowd,

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

Thick lay the summer flowers upon the ground,
And now from far-off halls uprose the sound
Of Lydian music, and the dancer's cry,
As though some door were opened suddenly.

So there he stood, some help from her to gain,
Bewildered by that twilight midst of day ;
Downcast with listening to the joyous strain
He had no part in, hopeless with delay
Of all the fair things he had meant to say ;
Yet, as the incense on the flame he cast,
From stammering lips and pale these words there passed :

“ O thou forgotten help, dost thou yet know
What thing it is I need, when even I,
Bent down before thee in this shame and woe,
Can frame no set of words to tell thee why
I needs must pray, O help me or I die !
Or slay me, and in slaying take from me
Even a dead man's feeble memory.

“ Say not thine help I have been slow to seek ;
Here have I been from the first hour of morn,
Who stand before thy presence faint and weak,
Of my one poor delight left all forlorn ;
Trembling with many fears, the hope outworn
I had when first I left my love, my shame,
To call upon thine oft-sung glorious name.”

He stopped to catch his breath, for as a sob
Did each word leave his mouth ; but suddenly,

PYGMALION AND THE IMAGE

Like a live thing, the thin flame 'gan to throb
And gather force, and then shot up on high
A steady spike of light, that drew anigh
The sunbeam in the dome, then sank once more
Into a feeble flicker as before.

But at that sight the nameless hope he had
That kept him living midst unhappiness,
Stirred in his breast, and with changed face and glad
Unto the image forward must he press
With words of praise his first word to redress,
But then it was as though a thick black cloud
Altar, and fire, and ivory limbs did shroud.

He staggered back, amazed and full of awe ;
But when, with anxious eyes, he gazed around,
About him still the worshippers he saw
Sunk in their wonted works, with no surprise
At what to him seemed awful mysteries ;
Therewith he sighed and said, " This, too, I dream,
No better day upon my life shall beam."

And yet for long upon the place he gazed
Where other folk beheld the lovely Queen ;
And while he looked the dusky veil seemed raised,
And every thing was as it erst had been ;
And then he said, " Such marvels I have seen
As some sick man may see from off his bed :
Ah, I am sick, and would that I were dead !"

Therewith, not questioning his heart at all,
He turned away and left the holy place,

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

When now the wide sun reddened towards his fall,
And a fresh west wind held the clouds in chase ;
But coming out, at first he hid his face
Dazed with the light, and in the porch he stood,
Nor wished to move, or change his dreary mood.

Yet in a while the freshness of the eve
Pierced to his weary heart, and with a sigh
He raised his head, and slowly 'gan to leave
The high carved pillars ; and so presently
Had passed the grove of whispering myrtles by,
And, mid the many noises of the street,
Made himself brave the eyes of men to meet.

Thronged were the ways with folk in gay attire,
Nursing the end of that festivity ;
Girls fit to move the moody man's desire
Brushed past him, and soft dainty minstrelsy
He heard amid the laughter, and might see,
Through open doors, the garden's green delight,
Where pensive lovers waited for the night ;

Or resting dancers round the fountain drawn,
With faces flushed unto the breeze turned round,
Or wandering o'er the fragrant trodden lawn,
Took up their fallen garlands from the ground,
Or languidly their scattered tresses bound,
Or let their gathered raiment fall adown,
With eyes downcast beneath their lovers' frown.

What hope Pygmalion yet might have, when he
First left the pillars of the dreamy place,

PYGMALION AND THE IMAGE

Amid such sights had vanished utterly.
He turned his weary eyes from face to face,
Nor noted them, as at a lagging pace
He gat towards home, and still was murmuring,
“Ah life, sweet life! the only godlike thing!”

And as he went, though longing to be there
Whereas his sole desire awaited him,
Yet did he loath to see the image fair,
White and unchanged of face, unmoved of limb,
And to his heart came dreamy thoughts and dim
That unto some strange region he might come,
Nor ever reach again his loveless home.

Yet soon, indeed, before his door he stood,
And, as a man awaking from a dream,
Seemed waked from his old folly; nought seemed good
In all the things that he before had deemed
At least worth life, and on his heart there streamed
Cold light of day—he found himself alone,
Reft of desire, all love and madness gone.

And yet for that past folly must he weep,
As one might mourn the parted happiness
That, mixed with madness, made him smile in sleep;
And still some lingering sweetness seemed to bless
The hard life left of toil and loneliness,
Like a past song too sweet, too short, and yet
Emmeshed for ever in the memory's net.

Weeping he entered, murmuring, “O fair Queen,
I thank thee that my prayer was not for nought,

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

Truly a present helper hast thou been
To those who faithfully thy throne have sought !
Yet, since with pain deliverance I have bought,
Hast thou not yet some gift in store for me,
That I thine happy slave henceforth may be ? ”

THUS to his chamber at the last he came,
And, pushing through the still half-opened door,
He stood within ; but there, for very shame
Of all the things that he had done before,
Still kept his eyes bent down upon the floor,
Thinking of all that he had done and said
Since he had wrought that luckless marble maid.

Yet soft his thoughts were, and the very place
Seemed perfumed with some nameless heavenly air,
So gaining courage, did he raise his face
Unto the work his hands had made so fair,
And cried aloud to see the niche all bare
Of that sweet form, while through his heart again
There shot a pang of his old yearning pain.

Yet while he stood, and knew not what to do
With yearning, a strange thrill of hope there came,
A shaft of new desire now pierced him through,
And therewithal a soft voice called his name,
And when he turned, with eager eyes aflame,
He saw betwixt him and the setting sun
The lively image of his loved one.

PYGMALION AND THE IMAGE

He trembled at the sight, for though her eyes,
Her very lips, were such as he had made,
And though her tresses fell but in such guise
As he had wrought them, now was she arrayed
In that fair garment that the priests had laid
Upon the goddess on that very morn,
Dyed like the setting sun upon the corn.

Speechless he stood, but she now drew anear,
Simple and sweet as she was wont to be,
And all at once her silver voice rang clear,
Filling his soul with great felicity,
And thus she spoke, "Pygmalion, come to me,
O dear companion of my new-found life,
For I am called thy lover and thy wife.

"Listen, these words the Dread One bade me say
That was with me e'en now, *Pygmalion*,
My new-made soul I give to thee to-day,
Come, feel the sweet breath that thy prayer has won,
And lay thine hand this heaving breast upon !
Come, love, and walk with me between the trees,
And feel the freshness of the evening breeze.

"Sweep mine hair round thy neck ; behold my feet,
The oft-kissed feet thou thoughtst should never move,
Press down the daisies ! draw me to thee, sweet,
And feel the warm heart of thy living love
Beat against thine, and bless the Seed of Jove
Whose loving tender heart hath wrought all this,
And wrapped us both in such a cloud of bliss.

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

“ Ah, thou art wise to know what this may mean !
Sweet seem the words to me, and needs must I
Speak all the lesson of the lovely Queen :
But this I know, I would we were more nigh,
I have not heard thy voice but in the cry
Thou utteredst then, when thou believedst gone
The marvel of thine hands, the maid of stone.”

She reached her hand to him, and with kind eyes
Gazed into his ; but he the fingers caught
And drew her to him, and midst ecstasies
Passing all words, yea, well-nigh passing thought,
Felt that sweet breath that he so long had sought,
Felt the warm life within her heaving breast
As in his arms his living love he pressed.

But as his cheek touched hers he heard her say,
“ Wilt thou not speak, O love ? why dost thou weep ?
Art thou then sorry for this long-wished day,
Or dost thou think perchance thou wilt not keep
This that thou holdest, but in dreamy sleep ?
Nay, let us do the bidding of the Queen,
And hand in hand walk through thy garden green ;

“ Then shalt thou tell me, still beholding me,
Full many things whereof I wish to know,
And as we walk from whispering tree to tree
Still more familiar to thee shall I grow,
And such things shalt thou say unto me now
As when thou deemedst thou wast quite alone,
A madman, kneeling to a thing of stone.”

PYGMALION AND THE IMAGE

But at that word a smile lit up his eyes
And therewithal he spake some loving word,
And she at first looked up in grave surprise
When his deep voice and musical she heard,
And clung to him as grown somewhat afeard ;
Then cried aloud and said, " O mighty one !
What joy with thee to look upon the sun."

Then into that fair garden did they pass
And all the story of his love he told,
And as the twain went o'er the dewy grass,
Beneath the risen moon could he behold
The bright tears trickling down, then, waxen bold,
He stopped and said, " Ah, love, what meaneth this ?
Seest thou how tears still follow earthly bliss ?"

Then both her white arms round his neck she threw,
And sobbing said, " O love, what hurteth me ?
When first the sweetness of my life I knew,
Not this I felt, but when I first saw thee
A little pain and great felicity
Rose up within me, and thy talk e'en now
Made pain and pleasure ever greater grow ?"

" O sweet," he said, " this thing is even love,
Whereof I told thee ; that all wise men fear,
But yet escape not ; nay, to gods above,
Unless the old tales lie, it draweth near.
But let my happy ears I pray thee hear
Thy story too, and how thy blessed birth
Has made a heaven of this once lonely earth."

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

"My sweet," she said, "as yet I am not wise,
Or stored with words, aright the tale to tell,
But listen: when I opened first mine eyes
I stood within the niche thou knowest well,
And from mine hand a heavy thing there fell
Carved like these flowers, nor could I see things clear,
And but a strange confused noise could hear.

"At last mine eyes could see a woman fair,
But awful as this round white moon o'erhead,
So that I trembled when I saw her there,
For with my life was born some touch of dread,
And therewithal I heard her voice that said,
'Come down, and learn to love and be alive,
For thee, a well-prized gift, to-day I give.'

"Then on the floor I stepped, rejoicing much,
Not knowing why, not knowing aught at all,
Till she reached out her hand my breast to touch,
And when her fingers thereupon did fall,
Thought came unto my life, and therewithal
I knew her for a goddess, and began
To murmur in some tongue unknown to man.

"And then indeed not in this guise was I,
No sandals had I, and no saffron gown,
But naked as thou knowest utterly,
E'en as my limbs beneath thine hand had grown,
And this fair perfumed robe then fell adown
Over the goddess' feet and swept the ground,
And round her loins a glittering belt was bound.

PYGMALION AND THE IMAGE

“But when the stammering of my tongue she heard
Upon my trembling lips her hand she laid,
And spoke again, ‘Nay, say not any word,
All that thine heart would say I know unsaid,
Who even now thine heart and voice have made ;
But listen rather, for thou knowest now
What these words mean, and still wilt wiser grow.

“ ‘Thy body, lifeless till I gave it life,
A certain man, my servant, well hath wrought,
I give thee to him as his love and wife,
With all thy dowry of desire and thought,
Since this his yearning heart hath ever sought ;
Now from my temple is he on the way,
Deeming to find thee e’en as yesterday ;

“ ‘Bide thou his coming by the bed-head there,
And when thou seest him set his eyes upon
Thine empty niche, and hear’st him cry for care,
Then call him by his name, Pygmalion,
And certainly thy lover hast thou won ;
But when he stands before thee silently,
Say all these words that I shall teach to thee.’

“With that she said what first I told thee, love,
And then went on, ‘Moreover thou shalt say
That I, the daughter of almighty Jove,
Have wrought for him this long-desired day ;
In sign whereof, these things that pass away,
Wherein mine image men have well arrayed,
I give thee for thy wedding gear, O maid.’

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

“Therewith her raiment she put off from her,
And laid bare all her perfect loveliness,
And, smiling on me, came yet more anear,
And on my mortal lips her lips did press,
And said, ‘Now herewith shalt thou love no less
Than Psyche loved my son in days of old ;
Farewell, of thee shall many a tale be told.’

“And even with that last word was she gone,
How, I know not, and I my limbs arrayed
In her fair gift, and waited thee alone—
Ah, love, indeed the word is true she said,
For now I love thee so, I grow afraid
Of what the gods upon our heads may send—
I love thee so, I think upon the end.”

What words he said ? How can I tell again
What words they said beneath the glimmering light,
Some tongue they used unknown to loveless men
As each to each they told their great delight,
Until for stillness of the growing night
Their soft sweet murmuring words seemed growing
loud,
And dim the moon grew, hid by fleecy cloud.

AUGUST

SUCH was the ending of his ancient rhyme,
That seemed to fit that soft and golden time,
When men were happy, they could scarce tell why,
Although they felt the rich year slipping by.
The sun went down, the harvest-moon arose,
And 'twixt the slim trees of that fruitful close
They saw the corn still falling 'neath its light,
While through the soft air of the windless night
The voices of the reapers' mates rang clear
In measured song, as of the fruitful year
They told, and its delights, and now and then
The rougher voices of the toiling men
Joined in the song, as one by one released
From that hard toil, they sauntered towards the feast
That waited them upon the strip of grass
That through the golden-glimmering sea did pass.

But those old men, glad to have lived so long,
Sat listening through the twilight to the song,
And when the night grew and all things were still
Throughout the wide vale from green hill to hill
Unto a happy harvesting they drank
Till once more o'er the hills the white moon sank.

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

AUGUST had not gone by, though now was stored
In the sweet-smelling granaries all the hoard
Of golden corn; the land had made her gain,
And winter should howl round her doors in vain.
But o'er the same fields grey now and forlorn
The old men sat and heard the swineherd's horn,
Far off across the stubble, when the day
At end of harvest-tide was sad and grey;
And rain was in the wind's voice as it swept
Along the hedges where the lone quail crept,
Beneath the chattering of the restless pie.
The fruit-hung branches moved, and suddenly
The trembling apples smote the dewless grass,
And all the year to autumn-tide did pass.
E'en such a day it was as young men love
When swiftly through the veins the blood doth move,
And they, whose eyes can see not death at all,
To thoughts of stirring deeds and pleasure fall,
Because it seems to them to tell of life
After the dreamy days devoid of strife,
When every day with sunshine is begun,
And cloudless skies receive the setting sun.

On such a day the older folk were fain
Of something new somewhat to dull the pain
Of sad, importunate old memories
That to their weary hearts must needs arise.

AUGUST

Alas ! what new things on that day could come
From hearts that now so long had been the home
Of such dull thoughts, nay, rather let them tell
Some tale that fits their ancient longings well.

Rolf was the speaker, who said, "Friends, behold
This is e'en such a tale as those once told
Unto my greedy ears by Nicholas,
Before our quest for nothing came to pass."

OGIER THE DANE

ARGUMENT

WHEN Ogier was born, six fay ladies came to the cradle where he lay, and gave him various gifts, as to be brave and happy and the like; but the sixth gave him to be her love when he should have lived long in the world: so Ogier grew up and became the greatest of knights, and at last, after many years, fell into the hands of that fay, and with her, as the story tells, he lives now, though he returned once to the world, as is shown in the process of this tale.

WITHIN some Danish city by the sea,
Whose name, changed now, is all unknown to me,
Great mourning was there one fair summer eve,
Because the angels, bidden to receive
The fair Queen's lovely soul in Paradise,
Had done their bidding, and in royal guise
Her helpless body, once the prize of love,
Unable now for fear or hope to move,
Lay underneath the golden canopy;
And bowed down by unkingly misery
The King sat by it, and not far away,
Within the chamber a fair man-child lay,
His mother's bane, the king that was to be,
Not witting yet of any royalty,
Harmless and loved, although so new to life.

OGIER THE DANE

Calm the June evening was, no sign of strife
The clear sky showed, no storm grew round the sun,
Unhappy that his day of bliss was done ;
Dumb was the sea, and if the beech-wood stirred,
'Twas with the nestling of the grey-winged bird
Midst its thick leaves ; and though the nightingale
Her ancient, hapless sorrow must bewail,
No more of woe there seemed within her song
Than such as doth to lovers' words belong,
Because their love is still unsatisfied.

But to the King, on that sweet eventide,
No earth there seemed, no heaven when earth was gone ;
No help, no God ! but lonely pain alone ;
And he, midst unreal shadows, seemed to sit
Himself the very heart and soul of it.
But round the cradle of the new-born child
The nurses now the weary time beguiled
With stories of the just departed Queen ;
And how, amid the heathen folk first seen,
She had been won to love and godliness ;
And as they spoke, e'en midst his dull distress,
An eager whisper now and then did smite
Upon the King's ear, of some past delight,
Some once familiar name, and he would raise
His weary head, and on the speaker gaze
Like one about to speak, but soon again
Would drop his head and be alone with pain,
Nor think of these ; who, silent in their turn,
Would sit and watch the waxen tapers burn
Amidst the dusk of the quick-gathering night,
Until beneath the high stars' glimmering light,

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

The fresh earth lay in colourless repose.

So passed the night, and now and then one rose
From out her place to do what might avail
To still the new-born infant's fretful wail ;
Or through the softly-opened door there came
Some nurse new waked, who, whispering low the name
Of her whose turn was come, would take her place ;
Then toward the King would turn about her face
And to her fellows whisper of the day,
And tell again of her just past away.

So waned the hours, the moon arose and grew,
From off the sea a little west-wind blew,
Rustling the garden-leaves like sudden rain ;
And ere the moon began to fall again
The wind grew cold, a change was in the sky,
And in deep silence did the dawn draw nigh :
Then from her place a nurse arose to light
Fresh hallowed lights, for, dying with the night,
The tapers round about the dead Queen were ;
But the King raised his head and 'gan to stare
Upon her, as her sweeping gown did glide
About the floor, that in the stillness cried
Beneath her careful feet ; and now as she
Had lit the second candle carefully,
And on its silver spike another one
Was setting, through her body did there run
A sudden tremor, and the hand was stayed
That on the dainty painted wax was laid ;
Her eyelids fell down and she seemed to sleep,
And o'er the staring King began to creep

OGIER THE DANE

Sweet slumber too ; the bitter lines of woe
That drew his weary face did softer grow,
His eyelids dropped, his arms fell to his side ;
And moveless in their places did abide
The nursing women, held by some strong spell,
E'en as they were, and utter silence fell
Upon the mournful, glimmering chamber; fair.

But now light footsteps coming up the stair,
Smote on the deadly stillness, and the sound
Of silken dresses trailing o'er the ground ;
And heavenly odours through the chamber passed,
Unlike the scents that rose and lily cast
Upon the freshness of the dying night ;
Then nigher drew the sound of footsteps light
Until the door swung open noiselessly—
A mass of sunlit flowers there seemed to be
Within the doorway, and but pale and wan
The flame showed now that serveth mortal man,
As one by one six seeming ladies passed
Into the room, and o'er its sorrow cast
That thoughtless sense of joy bewildering,
That kisses youthful hearts amidst of spring ;
Crowned were they, in such glorious raiment clad,
As yet no merchant of the world has had
Within his coffers ; yet those crowns seemed fair
Only because they kissed their odorous hair,
And all that flowery raiment was but blessed
By those fair bodies that its splendour pressed.

Now to the cradle from that glorious band
A woman passed, and laid a tender hand
Upon the babe, and gently drew aside

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

The swathings soft that did his body hide ;
And, seeing him so fair and great, she smiled,
And stooped, and kissed him, saying, " O noble child,
Have thou a gift from Gloriande this day ;
For to the time when life shall pass away
From this dear heart, no fear of death or shame,
No weariness of good shall foul thy name."

So saying, to her sisters she returned ;
And one came forth, upon whose brow there burned
A crown of rubies, and whose heaving breast
With happy rings a golden hauberk pressed ;
She took the babe, and somewhat frowning said,
" This gift I give, that till thy limbs are laid
At rest for ever, to thine honoured life
There never shall be lacking war and strife,
That thou a long-enduring name mayst win,
And by thy deeds, good pardon for thy sin."

With that another, who, unseen, meanwhile
Had drawn anigh, said with a joyous smile,
" And this forgotten gift to thee I give,
That while amidst the turmoil thou dost live,
Still shalt thou win the game, and unto thee
Defeat and shame but idle words shall be."

Then back they turned, and therewithal, the fourth
Said, " Take this gift for what it may be worth,
For that is mine to give ; lo, thou shalt be
Gentle of speech, and in all courtesy
The first of men : a little gift this is,
After these promises of fame and bliss."

Then toward the babe the fifth fair woman went ;
Grey-eyed she was, and simple, with eyes bent

OGIER THE DANE

Down on the floor, parted her red lips were,
And o'er her sweet face marvellously fair
Oft would the colour spread full suddenly ;
Clad in a dainty gown and thin was she,
For some green summer of the fay-land dight ;
Tripping she went, and laid her fingers light
Upon the child, and said, " O little one,
As long as thou shalt look upon the sun
Shall women long for thee ; take heed to this,
And give them what thou canst of love and bliss."

Then, blushing for her words, therefrom she past,
And by the cradle stood the sixth and last,
The fairest of them all ; awhile she gazed
Down on the child, and then her hand she raised,
And made the one side of her bosom bare ;
" Ogier," she said, " if this be foul or fair
Thou know'st not now, but when thine earthly
life

Is drunk out to the dregs, and war and strife
Have yielded thee whatever joy they may,
Thine head upon this bosom shalt thou lay ;
And then, despite of knowledge or of God,
Will we be glad upon the flowery sod
Within the happy country where I dwell :
Ogier, my love that is to be, farewell !"

She turned, and even as they came they passed
From out the place, and reached the gate at last
That oped before their feet, and speedily
They gained the edges of the murmuring sea,
And as they stood in silence, gazing there

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

Out to the west, they vanished into air,
I know not how, nor whereto they returned.

But mixed with twilight in the chamber burned
The flickering candles, and those dreary folk,
Unlike to sleepers, from their trance awoke,
But nought of what had happed meanwhile they knew.
Through the half-opened casements now there blew
A sweet fresh air, that of the flowers and sea
Mingled together, smelt deliciously,
And from the unseen sun the spreading light
Began to make the fair June blossoms bright,
And midst their weary woe uprose the sun,
And thus has Ogier's noble life begun.

HOPE is our life, when first our life grows clear ;
Hope and delight, scarce crossed by lines of fear ;
Yet the day comes when fain we would not hope,
But forasmuch as we with life must cope,
Struggling with this and that, who knoweth why ?
Hope will not give us up to certainty,
But still must bide with us : and with this man,
Whose life amid such promises began
Great things she wrought ; but now the time has come
When he no more on earth may have his home.

Great things he suffered, great delights he had,
Unto great kings he gave good deeds for bad ;
He ruled o'er kingdoms where his name no more

OGIER THE DANE

Is had in memory, and on many a shore
He left his sweat and blood to win a name
Passing the bounds of earthly creatures' fame.
A love he won and lost, a well-loved son
Whose little day of promise soon was done :
A tender wife he had, that he must leave
Before his heart her love could well receive ;
Those promised gifts, that on his careless head
In those first hours of his fair life were shed
He took unwitting, and unwitting spent,
Nor gave himself to grief and discontent
Because he saw the end a-drawing nigh.

Where is he now ? in what land must he die,
To leave an empty name to us on earth ?
A tale half true, to cast across our mirth
Some pensive thoughts of life that might have been ;
Where is he now, that all this life has seen ?

Behold, another eve upon the earth
Than that calm evening of the warrior's birth ;
The sun is setting in the west, the sky
Is bright and clear and hard, and no clouds lie
About the golden circle of the sun ;
But East, aloof from him, heavy and dun
Steel-grey they pack with edges red as blood,
And underneath them is the weltering flood
Of some huge sea, whose tumbling hills, as they
Turn restless sides about, are black or grey,
Or green, or glittering with the golden flame ;
The wind has fallen now, but still the same
The mighty army moves, as if to drown

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

This lone, bare rock, whose sheer scarped sides of
brown

Cast off the weight of waves in clouds of spray.

Alas ! what ships upon an evil day
Bent over to the wind in this ill sea ?
What navy, whose rent bones lie wretchedly
Beneath these cliffs ? a mighty one it was,
A fearful storm to bring such things to pass.

This is the loadstone rock ; no armament
Of warring nations, in their madness bent
Their course this way ; no merchant wittingly
Has steered his keel unto this luckless sea ;
Upon no shipman's card its name is writ,
Though worn-out mariners will speak of it
Within the ingle on the winter's night,
When all within is warm and safe and bright,
And the wind howls without : but 'gainst their will
Are some folk driven here, and then all skill
Against this evil rock is vain and nought,
And unto death the shipmen soon are brought ;
For then the keel, as by a giant's hand,
Is drawn unto that mockery of a land,
And presently unto its sides doth cleave ;
When if they 'scape swift death, yet none may leave
The narrow limits of that barren isle,
And thus are slain by famine in a while,
Mocked, as they say, by night with images
Of noble castles among groves of trees,
By day with sounds of merry minstrelsy.

OGIER THE DANE

The sun sinks now below this hopeless sea,
The clouds are gone, and all the sky is bright ;
The moon is rising o'er the growing night,
And by its shine may ye behold the bones
Of generations of these luckless ones
Scattered about the rock ; but nigh the sea
Sits one alive, who uncomplainingly
Awaits his death. White-haired is he and old,
Arrayed in royal raiment, bright with gold,
But tarnished with the waves and rough salt air ;
Huge is he, of a noble face and fair,
As for an ancient man, though toil and eld
Furrow the cheeks that ladies once beheld
With melting hearts—Nay, listen, for he speaks !
“ God, Thou hast made me strong ! nigh seven weeks
Have passed since from the wreck we haled our store,
And five long days well told, have now passed o'er
Since my last fellow died, with my last bread
Between his teeth, and yet I am not dead.
Yea, but for this I had been strong enow
In some last bloody field my sword to show.
What matter ? soon will all be past and done,
Where'er I died I must have died alone :
Yet, Caraheu, a good death had it been,
Dying, thy face above me to have seen,
And heard my banner flapping in the wind.
Then, though my memory had not left thy mind,
Yet hope and fear would not have vexed thee more
When thou hadst known that everything was o'er ;
But now thou waitest, still expecting me,
Whose sail shall never speck thy bright blue sea.

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

“ And thou, Clarice, the merchants thou mayst call,
To tell thee tales within thy pictured hall,
But never shall they tell true tales of me :
Whatever sails the Kentish hills may see
Swept by the flood-tide toward thy well-walled town,
No more on my sails shall they look adown.

“ Get thee another leader, Charlemaine,
For thou shalt look to see my shield in vain,
When in the fair fields of the Frankish land,
Thick as the corn they tread, the heathen stand.

“ What matter ? ye shall learn to live your lives ;
Husbands and children, other friends and wives,
Shall wipe the tablets of your memory clean,
And all shall be as I had never been.

“ And now, O God, am I alone with Thee ;
A little thing indeed it seems to be
To give this life up, since it needs must go
Some time or other ; now at last I know
How foolishly men play upon the earth,
When unto them a year of life seems worth
Honour and friends, and these vague hopes and sweet
That like real things my dying heart do greet,
Unreal while living on the earth I trod,
And but myself I knew no other god.
Behold, I thank Thee that Thou sweet’nest thus
This end, that I had thought most piteous,
If of another I had heard it told.”

What man is this, who weak and worn and old,
Gives up his life within that dreadful isle,

OGIER THE DANE

And on the fearful coming death can smile?
Alas! this man, so battered and outworn,
Is none but he, who, on that summer morn,
Received such promises of glorious life:
Ogier the Dane this is, to whom all strife
Was but as wine to stir awhile the blood,
To whom all life, however hard, was good:
This is the man, unmatched of heart and limb,
Ogier the Dane, whose sight has waxed not dim
For all the years that he on earth has dwelt;
Ogier the Dane, that never fear has felt,
Since he knew good from ill; Ogier the Dane,
The heathen's dread, the evil-doer's bane.

BRIGHT had the moon grown as his words were done,
And no more was there memory of the sun
Within the west, and he grew drowsy now,
And somewhat smoother was his wrinkled brow
As thought died out beneath the hand of sleep,
And o'er his soul forgetfulness did creep,
Hiding the image of swift-coming death;
Until as peacefully he drew his breath
As on that day, past for a hundred years,
When, midst the nurse's quickly-falling tears,
He fell asleep to his first lullaby.

The night changed as he slept, white clouds and high
Began about the lonely moon to close;
And from the dark west a new wind arose,

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

And with the sound of heavy-falling waves
Mingled its pipe about the loadstone caves ;
But when the twinkling stars were hid away,
And a faint light and broad, like dawn of day,
The moon upon that dreary country shed,
Ogier awoke, and lifting up his head
And smiling, muttered, "Nay, no more again ;
Rather some pleasure new, some other pain,
Unthought of both, some other form of strife ;"
For he had waked from dreams of his old life,
And through St. Omer's archer-guarded gate
Once more had seemed to pass, and saw the state
Of that triumphant king ; and still, though all
Seemed changed, and folk by other names did call
Faces he knew of old, yet none the less
He seemed the same, and, midst that mightiness,
Felt his own power, and grew the more athirst
For coming glory, as of old, when first
He stood before the face of Charlemaine,
A helpless hostage with all life to gain.

But now, awake, his worn face once more sank
Between his hands, and, murmuring not, he drank
The draught of death that must that thirst allay.

But while he sat and waited for the day
A sudden light across the bare rock streamed,
Which at the first he noted not, but deemed
The moon her fleecy veil had broken through ;
But ruddier indeed this new light grew
Than were the moon's grey beams, and, therewithal
Soft far-off music on his ears did fall ;

OGIER THE DANE

Yet moved he not, but murmured, "This is death.
An easy thing like this to yield my breath,
Awake, yet dreaming, with no sounds of fear,
No dreadful sights to tell me it is near;
Yea, God, I thank Thee!" but with that last word
It seemed to him that he his own name heard
Whispered, as though the wind had borne it past;
With that he gat unto his feet at last,
But still awhile he stood, with sunken head,
And in a low and trembling voice he said,
"Lord, I am ready, whither shall I go?
I pray Thee unto me some token show."
And, as he said this, round about he turned,
And in the east beheld a light that burned
As bright as day; then, though his flesh might fear
The coming change that he believed so near,
Yet did his soul rejoice, for now he thought
Unto the very heaven to be brought:
And though he felt alive, deemed it might be
That he in sleep had died full easily.

Then toward that light did he begin to go,
And still those strains he heard, far off and low,
That grew no louder; still that bright light streamed
Over the rocks, yet nothing brighter seemed,
But like the light of some unseen bright flame
Shone round about, until at last he came
Unto the dreary islet's other shore,
And then the minstrelsy he heard no more,
And softer seemed the strange light unto him;
But yet or ever it had grown quite dim,
Beneath its waning light could he behold

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

A mighty palace set about with gold,
Above green meads and groves of summer trees
Far-off across the welter of the seas ;
But, as he gazed, it faded from his sight,
And the grey hidden moon's diffused soft light,
Which soothly was but darkness to him now,
His sea-girt iron prison did but show.

But o'er the sea he still gazed wistfully,
And said, " Alas ! and when will this go by
And leave my soul in peace ? must I still dream
Of life that once so dear a thing did seem,
That, when I wake, death may the bitterer be ?
Here will I sit until he come to me,
And hide mine eyes and think upon my sin,
That so a little calm I yet may win
Before I stand within the awful place."

Then down he sat and covered up his face,
Yet therewithal his trouble could not hide,
Nor waiting thus for death could he abide,
For, though he knew it not, the yearning pain
Of hope of life had touched his soul again—
If he could live awhile, if he could live !
The mighty being, who once was wont to give
The gift of life to many a trembling man ;
Who did his own will since his life began ;
Who feared not aught, but strong and great and free
Still cast aside the thought of what might be ;
Must all this then be lost, and with no will,
Powerless and blind, must he some fate fulfil,
Nor know what he is doing any more ?

OGIER THE DANE

Soon he arose and paced along the shore,
And gazed out seaward for the blessed light ;
But nought he saw except the old sad sight,
The ceaseless tumbling of the billows grey,
The white upspringing of the spurts of spray
Amidst that mass of timbers, the rent bones
Of the sea-houses of the hapless ones
Once cast like him upon this deadly isle.

He stopped his pacing in a little while,
And clenched his mighty hands, and set his teeth,
And gazing at the ruin underneath,
He swung from off the bare cliff's jagged brow,
And on some slippery ledge he wavered now,
Without a hand-hold, and now stoutly clung
With hands alone, and o'er the welter hung,
Not caring aught if thus his life should end ;
But safely amidst all this did he descend
The dreadful cliff, and since no beach was there,
But from the depths the rock rose stark and bare,
Nor crumbled aught beneath the hammering sea,
Upon the wrecks he stood unsteadily.

But now, amid the clamour of the waves,
And washing to-and-fro of beams and staves,
Dizzy with hunger, dreamy with distress,
And all those days of fear and loneliness,
The ocean's tumult seemed the battle's roar,
His heart grew hot, as when in days of yore
He heard the cymbals clash amid the crowd
Of dusky faces ; now he shouted loud,
And from crushed beam to beam began to leap,

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

And yet his footing somehow did he keep
Amidst their tossing, and indeed the sea
Was somewhat sunk upon the island's lee.
So quickly on from wreck to wreck he passed,
And reached the outer line of wrecks at last,
And there a moment stood unsteadily,
Amid the drift of spray that hurried by,
And drew Courtain his sword from out its sheath,
And poised himself to meet the coming death,
Still looking out to sea ; but as he gazed,
And once or twice his doubtful feet he raised
To take the final plunge, that heavenly strain
Over the washing waves he heard again,
And from the dimness something bright he saw
Across the waste of waters towards him draw ;
And hidden now, now raised aloft, at last
Unto his very feet a boat was cast,
Gilded inside and out, and well arrayed
With cushions soft ; far fitter to have weighed
From some sweet garden on the shallow Seine,
Or in a reach of green Thames to have lain,
Than struggle with that huge confused sea ;
But Ogier gazed upon it doubtfully
One moment, and then, sheathing Courtain, said
“ What tales are these about the newly dead
The heathen told ? what matter, let all pass ;
This moment as one dead indeed I was,
And this must be what I have got to do,
I yet perchance may light on something new
Before I die ; though yet perchance this keel
Unto the wondrous mass of charmed steel

OGIER THE DANE

Is drawn as others." With that word he leapt
Into the boat, and o'er the cushions crept
From stem to stern, but found no rudder there,
Nor any oars, nor were the cushions fair
Made wet by any dashing of the sea.

Now while he pondered how these things could be,
The boat began to move therefrom at last,
But over him a drowsiness was cast,
And as o'er tumbling hills the skiff did pass,
He clean forgot his death and where he was.

At last he woke up to a sunny day,
And, looking round, saw that his shallop lay
Moored at the edge of some fair tideless sea
Unto an overhanging thick-leaved tree,
Where in the green waves did the low bank dip
Its fresh and green grass-covered daisied lip;
But Ogier looking thence no more could see
That sad abode of death and misery,
Nor aught but wide and empty ocean, grey
With gathering haze, for now it neared midday;
Then from the golden cushions did he rise,
And wondering still if this were Paradise
He stepped ashore, but drew Courtain his sword
And muttered therewithal a holy word.

Fair was the place, as though amidst of May,
Nor did the brown birds fear the sunny day,
For with their quivering song the air was sweet;
Thick grew the field-flowers underneath his feet,
And on his head the blossoms down did rain,
Yet mid these fair things slowly and with pain

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

He 'gan to go, yea, even when his foot
First touched the flowery sod, to his heart's root
A coldness seemed to strike, and now each limb
Was growing stiff, his eyes waxed bleared and dim,
And all his stored-up memory 'gan to fail,
Nor yet would his once mighty heart avail
For lamentations o'er his changed lot ;
Yet urged by some desire, he knew not what,
Along a little path 'twixt hedges sweet,
Drawn sword in hand, he dragged his faltering feet,
For what then seemed to him a weary way,
Whereon his steps he needs must often stay
And lean upon the mighty well-worn sword
That in those hands, grown old, for king or lord
Had small respect in glorious days long past.

But still he crept along, and at the last
Came to a gilded wicket, and through this
Entered a garden fit for utmost bliss,
If that might last which needs must soon go by :
There 'gainst a tree he leaned, and with a sigh
He said, "O God, a sinner I have been,
And good it is that I these things have seen
Before I meet what Thou hast set apart
To cleanse the earthly folly from my heart ;
But who within this garden now can dwell
Wherein guilt first upon the world befell ?"

A little further yet he staggered on,
Till to a fountain-side at last he won,
O'er which two white-thorns their sweet blossoms shed,
There he sank down, and laid his weary head

OGIER THE DANE

Beside the mossy roots, and in a while
He slept, and dreamed himself within the isle ;
That splashing fount the weary sea did seem,
And in his dream the fair place but a dream ;
But when again to feebleness he woke
Upon his ears that heavenly music broke,
Not faint or far as in the isle it was,
But e'en as though the minstrels now did pass
Anigh his resting-place ; then fallen in doubt,
E'en as he might, he rose and gazed about,
Leaning against the hawthorn stem with pain ;
And yet his straining gaze was but in vain,
Death stole so fast upon him, and no more
Could he behold the blossoms as before,
No more the trees seemed rooted to the ground,
A heavy mist seemed gathering all around,
And in its heart some bright thing seemed to be,
And round his head there breathed deliciously
Sweet odours, and that music never ceased.
But as the weight of Death's strong hand increased
Again he sank adown, and Courtain's noise
Within the scabbard seemed a farewell voice
Sent from the world he loved so well of old,
And all his life was as a story told,
And as he thought thereof he 'gan to smile
E'en as a child asleep, but in a while
It was as though he slept, and sleeping dreamed,
For in his half-closed eyes a glory gleamed,
As though from some sweet face and golden hair,
And on his breast were laid soft hands and fair,
And a sweet voice was ringing in his ears,

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

Broken as if with flow of joyous tears ;

“Ogier, sweet friend, hast thou not tarried long?
Alas! thine hundred years of strife and wrong!”

Then he found voice to say, “Alas! dear Lord,
Too long, too long; and yet one little word
Right many a year ago had brought me here.”

Then to his face that face was drawn anear,
He felt his head raised up and gently laid
On some kind knee, again the sweet voice said,

“Nay, Ogier, nay, not yet, not yet, dear friend!

Who knoweth when our linkéd life shall end,

Since thou art come unto mine arms at last,

And all the turmoil of the world is past?

Why do I linger ere I see thy face

As I desired it in that mourning place

So many years ago—so many years,

Thou knewest not thy love and all her fears?”

“Alas!” he said, “what mockery then is this

That thou wilt speak to me of earthly bliss?

No longer can I think upon the earth,

Have I not done with all its grief and mirth?

Yes, I was Ogier once, but if my love

Should come once more my dying heart to move,

Then must she come from 'neath the milk-white walls

Whereon to-day the hawthorn blossom falls

Outside St. Omer's—art thou she? her name

Which I remembered once mid death and fame

Is clean forgotten now; but yesterday,

Meseems, our son upon our bosom lay:

Baldwin the fair—what hast thou done with him

Since Charlot slew him? Ah, mine eyes wax dim;

OGIER THE DANE

Woman, forbear ! wilt thou not let me die ?
Did I forget thee in the days gone by ?
Then let me die, that we may meet again ! ”

He tried to move from her, but all in vain,
For life had well-nigh left him, but withal
He felt a kiss upon his forehead fall,
And could not speak ; he felt slim fingers fair
Move to his mighty sword-worn hand, and there
Set on some ring, and still he could not speak,
And once more sleep weighed down his eyelids weak.

BUT, ah ! what land was this he woke unto ?
What joy was this that filled his heart anew ?
Had he then gained the very Paradise ?
Trembling, he durst not at the first arise,
Although no more he felt the pain of eld,
Nor durst he raise his eyes that now beheld
Beside him the white flowers and blades of grass ;
He durst not speak, lest he some monster was.

But while he lay and hoped, that gentle voice
Once more he heard ; “ Yea, thou mayst well rejoice
Thou livest still, my sweet, thou livest still,
Apart from every earthly fear and ill ;
Wilt thou not love me, who have wrought thee this,
That I like thee may live in double bliss ? ”

Then Ogier rose up, nowise like to one
Whose span of earthly life is nigh outrun,
But as he might have risen in old days

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

To see the spears cleave the fresh morning haze ;
But, looking round, he saw no change there was
In the fair place wherethrough he first did pass,
Though all, grown clear and joyous to his eyes,
Now looked no worse than very Paradise ;
Behind him were the thorns, the fountain fair
Still sent its glittering stream forth into air,
And by its basin a fair woman stood,
And as their eyes met his new-healed blood
Rushed to his face ; with unused thoughts and sweet
And hurrying hopes, his heart began to beat.

The fairest of all creatures did she seem ;
So fresh and delicate you well might deem
That scarce for eighteen summers had she blessed
The happy, longing world ; yet, for the rest,
Within her glorious eyes such wisdom dwelt,
A child before her had the wise man felt,
And with the pleasure of a thousand years
Her lips were fashioned to move joy or tears
Among the longing folk where she might dwell,
To give at last the kiss unspeakable.

In such wise was she clad as folk may be,
Who, for no shame of their humanity,
For no sad changes of the imperfect year,
Rather for added beauty, raiment wear ;
For, as the heat-foretelling grey-blue haze
Veils the green flowery morn of late May-days,
Her raiment veiled her ; where the bands did meet
That bound the sandals to her dainty feet,
Gems gleamed ; a fresh rose-wreath embraced her head,
And on her breast there lay a ruby red.

OGIER THE DANE

So with a supplicating look she turned
To meet the flame that in his own eyes burned,
And held out both her white arms lovingly,
As though to greet him as he drew anigh.
Stammering he said, "Who art thou? how am I
So cured of all my evils suddenly,
That certainly I felt no mightier, when,
Amid the backward rush of beaten men,
About me drooped the axe-torn Oriflamme?
Alas! I fear that in some dream I am."

"Ogier," she said, "draw near, perchance it is
That such a name God gives unto our bliss;
I know not, but if thou art such an one
As I must deem, all days beneath the sun
That thou hadst had, shall be but dreams indeed
To those that I have given thee at thy need.
For many years ago beside the sea
When thou wert born, I plighted troth with thee:
Come near then, and make mirrors of mine eyes,
That thou mayst see what these my mysteries
Have wrought in thee; surely but thirty years,
Passed amidst joy, thy new-born body bears,
Nor while thou art with me, and on this shore
Art still full-fed of love, shalt thou seem more.
Nay, love, come nigher, and let me take thine hand,
The hope and fear of many a warring land,
And I will show thee wherein lies the spell,
Whereby this happy change upon thee fell."

Like a shy youth before some royal love,
Close up to that fair woman did he move,

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

And their hands met ; yet to his changéd voice
He dared not trust ; nay, scarcely could rejoice
E'en when her balmy breath he 'gan to feel,
And felt strange sweetness o'er his spirit steal
As her light raiment, driven by the wind,
Swept round him, and, bewildered and half-blind
His lips the treasure of her lips did press,
And round him clung her perfect loveliness.

For one sweet moment thus they stood, and then
She drew herself from out his arms again,
And panting, lovelier for her love, did stand
Apart awhile, then took her lover's hand,
And, in a trembling voice, made haste to say,—

“O Ogier, when thou camest here to-day,
I feared indeed, that in my play with fate,
I might have seen thee e'en one day too late,
Before this ring thy finger should embrace ;
Behold it, love, and thy keen eyes may trace
Faint figures wrought upon the ruddy gold ;
My father dying gave it me, nor told
The manner of its making, but I know
That it can make thee e'en as thou art now
Despite the laws of God—shrink not from me
Because I give an impious gift to thee—
Has not God made me also, who do this ?
But I, who longed to share with thee my bliss,
Am of the fays, and live their changeless life,
And, like the gods of old, I see the strife
That moves the world, unmoved if so I will ;
For we the fruit, that teaches good and ill,
Have never touched like you of Adam's race ;

OGIER THE DANE

And while thou dwellest with me in this place
Thus shalt thou be—ah, and thou deem'st, indeed,
That thou shalt gain thereby no happy meed
Reft of the world's joys? nor canst understand
How thou art come into a happy land?—
Love, in thy world the priests of heaven still sing,
And tell thee of it many a joyous thing;
But think'st thou, bearing the world's joy and pain,
Thou couldst live there? nay, nay, but born again
Thou wouldst be happy with the angels' bliss;
And so with us no otherwise it is,
Nor hast thou cast thine old life quite away
Even as yet, though that shall be to-day.

“But for the love and country thou hast won,
Know thou, that thou art come to Avallon,
That is both thine and mine; and as for me,
Morgan le Fay men call me commonly
Within the world, but fairer names than this
I have for thee and me, 'twixt kiss and kiss.”

Ah, what was this? and was it all in vain,
That she had brought him here this life to gain?
For, ere her speech was done, like one turned blind
He watched the kisses of the wandering wind
Within her raiment, or as some one sees
The very best of well-wrought images
When he is blind with grief, did he behold
The wandering tresses of her locks of gold
Upon her shoulders; and no more he pressed
The hand that in his own hand lay at rest:
His eyes, grown dull with changing memories,

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

Could make no answer to her glorious eyes :
Cold waxed his heart, and weary and distraught,
With many a cast-by, hateful, dreary thought,
Unfinished in the old days ; and withal
He needs must think of what might chance to fall
In this life new-begun ; and good and bad
Tormented him, because as yet he had
A worldly heart within his frame made new,
And to the deeds that he was wont to do
Did his desires still turn. But she a while
Stood gazing at him with a doubtful smile,
And let his hand fall down ; and suddenly
Sounded sweet music from some close near by,
And then she spoke again : " Come, love, with me,
That thou thy new life and delights mayst see."
And gently with that word she led him thence,
And though upon him now there fell a sense
Of dreamy and unreal bewilderment,
As hand in hand through that green place they went,
Yet therewithal a strain of tender love
A little yet his restless heart did move.

So through the whispering trees they came at last
To where a wondrous house a shadow cast
Across the flowers, and o'er the daisied grass
Before it, crowds of lovely folk did pass,
Playing about in carelessness and mirth,
Unshadowed by the doubtful deeds of earth ;
And from the midst a band of fair girls came,
With flowers and music, greeting him by name,
And praising him ; but ever like a dream

OGIER THE DANE

He could not break, did all to Ogier seem,
And he his old world did the more desire,
For in his heart still burned unquenched the fire,
That through the world of old so bright did burn :
Yet was he fain that kindness to return,
And from the depth of his full heart he sighed.

Then toward the house the lovely Queen did guide
His listless steps, and seemed to take no thought
Of knitted brow or wandering eyes distraught,
But still with kind love lighting up her face
She led him through the door of that fair place,
While round about them did the damsels press ;
And he was moved by all that loveliness
As one might be, who, lying half asleep
In the May morning, notes the light wind sweep
Over the tulip-beds : no more to him
Were gleaming eyes, red lips, and bodies slim,
Amidst that dream, although the first surprise
Of hurried love wherewith the Queen's sweet eyes
Had smitten him, still in his heart did stir.

And so at last he came, led on by her
Into a hall wherein a fair throne was,
And hand in hand thereto the twain did pass ;
And there she bade him sit, and when alone
He took his place upon the double throne,
She cast herself before him on her knees,
Embracing his, and greatly did increase
The shame and love that vexed his troubled heart :
But now a line of girls the crowd did part,
Lovelier than all, and Ogier could behold

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

One in their midst who bore a crown of gold
Within her slender hands and delicate ;
She, drawing nigh, beside the throne did wait
Until the Queen arose and took the crown,
Who then to Ogier's lips did stoop adown
And kissed him, and said, "Ogier, what were worth
Thy miserable days of strife on earth,
That on their ashes still thine eyes are turned?"

Then, as she spoke these words, his changed heart
burned

With sudden memories, and thereto had he
Made answer, but she raised up suddenly
The crown she held and set it on his head ;
"Ogier," she cried, "those troublous days are dead ;
Thou wert dead with them also, but for me ;
Turn unto her who wrought these things for thee !"

Then, as he felt her touch, a mighty wave
Of love swept o'er his soul, as though the grave
Did really hold his body ; from his seat
He rose to cast himself before her feet ;
But she clung round him, and in close embrace
The twain were locked amidst that thronging place.

Thenceforth new life indeed has Ogier won,
And in the happy land of Avallon
Quick glide the years o'er his unchanging head ;
There saw he many men the world thought dead,
Living like him in sweet forgetfulness
Of all the troubles that did once oppress
Their vainly-struggling lives—ah, how can I
Tell of their joy as though I had been nigh?

OGIER THE DANE

Suffice it that no fear of death they knew,
That there no talk there was of false or true,
Of right or wrong, for traitors came not there ;
That everything was bright and soft and fair,
And yet they wearied not for any change,
Nor unto them did constancy seem strange.
Love knew they, but its pain they never had,
But with each other's joy were they made glad ;
Nor were their lives wasted by hidden fire,
Nor knew they of the unfulfilled desire
That turns to ashes all the joys of earth,
Nor knew they yearning love amidst the dearth
Of kind and loving hearts to spend it on,
Nor dreamed of discontent when all was won ;
Nor need they struggle after wealth and fame ;
Still was the calm flow of their lives the same,
And yet, I say, they wearied not of it—
So did the promised days by Ogier flit.

THINK that a hundred years have now passed by,
Since ye beheld Ogier lie down to die
Beside the fountain ; think that now ye are
In France, made dangerous with wasting war ;
In Paris, where about each guarded gate,
Gathered in knots, the anxious people wait,
And press around each new-come man to learn
If Harfleur now the pagan wasters burn,
Or if the Rouen folk can keep their chain,

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

Or Pont de l'Arche unburnt still guards the Seine?
Or if 'tis true that Andelys succour wants?
That Vernon's folk are fleeing east to Mantes?
When will they come? or rather is it true
That a great band the Constable o'erthrew
Upon the marshes of the lower Seine,
And that their long-ships, turning back again,
Caught by the high-raised waters of the bore
Were driven here and there and cast ashore?

Such questions did they ask, and, as fresh men
Came hurrying in, they asked them o'er again,
And from scared folk, or fools, or ignorant,
Still got new lies, or tidings very scant.

But now amidst these men at last came one,
A little ere the setting of the sun,
With two stout men behind him, armed right well,
Who ever as they rode on, sooth to tell,
With doubtful eyes upon their master stared,
Or looked about like troubled men and scared.
And he they served was noteworthy indeed;
Of ancient fashion were his arms and weed,
Rich past the wont of men in those sad times;
His face was bronzed, as though by burning climes,
But lovely as the image of a god
Carved in the days before on earth Christ trod;
But solemn were his eyes, and grey as glass,
And like to ruddy gold his fine hair was:
A mighty man he was, and taller far
Than those who on that day must bear the war
The pagans waged: he by the warders stayed,

OGIER THE DANE

Scarce looked on them, but straight their words obeyed
And showed his pass; then, asked about his name
And from what city of the world he came,
Said, that men called him now the Ancient Knight,
That he was come midst the king's men to fight
From St. Omer's; and as he spoke, he gazed
Down on the thronging street as one amazed,
And answered no more to the questioning
Of frightened folk of this or that sad thing;
But, ere he passed on, turned about at last
And on the wondering guard a strange look cast,
And said, "St. Mary! do such men as ye
Fight with the wasters from across the sea?
Then, certes, are ye lost, however good
Your hearts may be; not such were those who stood
Beside the Hammer-bearer years ago."

So said he, and as his fair armour shone
With beauty of a time long passed away,
So with the music of another day
His deep voice thrilled the awe-struck, listening folk.

Yet from the crowd a mocking voice outbroke,
That cried, "Be merry, masters, fear ye nought,
Surely good succour to our side is brought;
For here is Charlemaine come off his tomb
To save his faithful city from its doom."

"Yea," said another, "this is certain news,
Surely ye know how all the carvers use
To carve the dead man's image at the best,
That guards the place where he may lie at rest;
Wherefore this living image looks indeed,

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

Spite of his ancient tongue and marvellous weed,
To have but thirty summers."

At the name
Of Charlemaine, he turned to whence there came
The mocking voice, and somewhat knit his brow,
And seemed as he would speak, but scarce knew how;
So with a half-sigh soon sank back again
Into his dream, and shook his well-wrought rein,
And silently went on upon his way.

And this was Ogier : on what evil day
Has he then stumbled, that he needs must come,
Midst war and ravage, to the ancient home
Of his desires ? did he grow weary then,
And wish to strive once more with foolish men
For worthless things ? or is fair Avallon
Sunk in the sea, and all that glory gone ?

Nay, thus it happed—One day she came to him
And said, " Ogier, thy name is waxing dim
Upon the world that thou rememberest not ;
The heathen men are thick on many a spot
Thine eyes have seen, and which I love therefore ;
And God will give His wonted help no more.
Wilt thou, then, help ? canst thou have any mind
To give thy banner once more to the wind ?
Since greater glory thou shalt win for this
Than erst thou gatheredst ere thou cam'st to bliss :
For men are dwindled both in heart and frame,
Nor holds the fair land any such a name
As thine, when thou wert living midst thy peers ;
The world is worser for these hundred years."

OGIER THE DANE

From his calm eyes there gleamed a little fire,
And in his voice was something of desire,
To see the land where he was used to be,
As now he answered: "Nay, choose thou for me,
Thou art the wisest; it is more than well
Within this peaceful place with thee to dwell:
Nor ill perchance in that old land to die,
If, dying, I keep not the memory
Of this fair life of ours." "Nay, nay," said she,
"As to thy dying, that shall never be,
Whiles that thou keep'st my ring—and now, behold,
I take from thee thy charmed crown of gold,
And thou wilt be the Ogier that thou wast
Ere on the loadstone rock thy ship was cast:
Yet thou shalt have thy youthful body still,
And I will guard thy life from every ill."

So was it done, and Ogier, armed right well,
Sleeping, was borne away by some strong spell,
And set upon the Flemish coast; and thence
Turned to St. Omer's, with a doubtful sense
Of being in some wild dream, the while he knew
That great delight forgotten was his due,
That all which there might hap was of small worth.

So on he went, and sometimes unto mirth
Did his attire move the country-folk,
But oftener when strange speeches from him broke
Concerning men and things for long years dead,
He filled the listeners with great awe and dread;
For in such wild times as these people were,
Are men soon moved to wonder and to fear.

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

Now through the streets of Paris did he ride,
And at a certain hostel did abide
Throughout that night, and ere he went next day
He saw a book that on a table lay,
And opening it 'gan read in lazy mood :
But long before it in that place he stood,
Noting nought else ; for it did chronicle
The deeds of men whom once he knew right well,
When they were living in the flesh with him :
Yea, his own deeds he saw, grown strange and dim
Already, and true stories mixed with lies,
Until, with many thronging memories
Of those old days, his heart was so oppressed,
He 'gan to wish that he might lie at rest,
Forgetting all things : for indeed by this
Little remembrance had he of the bliss
That wrapped his soul in peaceful Avallon.

But his changed life he needs must carry on ;
For ye shall know the Queen was gathering men
To send unto the good King, who as then
In Rouen lay, beset by many a band
Of those who carried terror through the land,
And still by messengers for help he prayed :
Therefore a mighty muster was being made,
Of weak and strong, and brave and timorous,
Before the Queen anigh her royal house.
So thither on this morn did Ogier turn,
Some certain news about the war to learn ;
And when he came at last into the square,
And saw the ancient palace great and fair

OGIER THE DANE

Rise up before him as in other days,
And in the merry morn the bright sun's rays
Glittering on gathered helms and moving spears,
He 'gan to feel as in the long-past years,
And his heart stirred within him. Now the Queen
Came from within, right royally beseen,
And took her seat beneath a canopy,
With lords and captains of the war anigh ;
And as she came a mighty shout arose,
And round about began the knights to close,
Their oath of fealty to swear anew,
And learn what service they had got to do.
But so it was, that some their shouts must stay
To gaze at Ogier as he took his way
Through the thronged place ; and quickly too he gat
Unto the place whereas the Lady sat,
For men gave place unto him, fearing him :
For not alone was he most huge of limb,
And dangerous, but something in his face,
As his calm eyes looked o'er the crowded place,
Struck men with awe ; and in the ancient days,
When men might hope alive on gods to gaze,
They would have thought, "The gods yet love our town
And from the heavens have sent a great one down."

Withal unto the throne he came so near,
That he the Queen's sweet measured voice could hear ;
And swiftly now within him wrought the change
That first he felt amid those faces strange ;
And his heart burned to taste the hurrying life
With such desires, such changing sweetness rife.
And yet, indeed, how should he live alone,

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

Who in the old past days such friends had known?
Then he began to think of Caraheu,
Of Bellicent the fair, and once more knew
The bitter pain of rent and ended love.
But while with hope and vain regret he strove,
He found none 'twixt him and the Queen's high seat,
And, stepping forth, he knelt before her feet
And took her hand to swear, as was the way
Of doing fealty in that ancient day,
And raised his eyes to hers; as fair was she
As any woman of the world might be;
Full-limbed and tall, dark-haired, from her deep eyes,
The snare of fools, the ruin of the wise,
Love looked unchecked; and now her dainty hand,
The well-knit holder of the golden wand,
Trembled in his, she cast her eyes adown,
And her sweet brow was knitted to a frown,
As he, the taker of such oaths of yore,
Now unto her all due obedience swore,
Yet gave himself no name; and now the Queen,
Awed by his voice as other folk had been,
Yet felt a trembling hope within her rise
Too sweet to think of, and with love's surprise
Her cheek grew pale; she said, "Thy style and name
Thou tellest not, nor what land of thy fame
Is glad; for, certes, some land must be glad,
That in its bounds her house thy mother had."

"Lady," he said, "from what far land I come
I well might tell thee, but another home
Have I long dwelt in, and its name have I
Forgotten now, forgotten utterly

OGIER THE DANE

Who were my fellows, and what deeds they did ;
Therefore, indeed, shall my first name be hid
And my first country ; call me on this day
The Ancient Knight, and let me go my way.”
He rose withal, for she her fingers fair
Had drawn aback, and on him 'gan to stare
As one afeard ; for something terrible
Was in his speech, and that she knew right well,
Who 'gan to love him, and to fear that she,
Shut out by some strange deadly mystery,
Should never gain from him an equal love ;
Yet, as from her high seat he 'gan to move,
She said, “ O Ancient Knight, come presently,
When we have done this muster, unto me,
And thou shalt have thy charge and due command
For freeing from our foes this wretched land ! ”

Then Ogier made his reverence and went,
And somewhat could perceive of her intent ;
For in his heart life grew, and love with life
Grew, and therewith, 'twixt love and fame, was strife.

But, as he slowly gat him from the square,
Gazing at all the people gathered there,
A squire of the Queen's behind him came,
And breathless, called him by his new-coined name,
And bade him turn because the Queen now bade,
Since by the muster long she might be stayed,
That to the palace he should bring him straight,
Midst sport and play her coming back to wait ;
Then Ogier turned, nought loath, and with him went,
And to a postern-gate his steps he bent,
That Ogier knew right well in days of old ;

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

Worn was it now, and the bright hues and gold
Upon the shields above, with lapse of days
Were faded much : but now did Ogier gaze
Upon the garden where he walked of yore,
Holding the hands that he should see no more ;
For all was changed except the palace fair,
That Charlemaine's own eyes had seen built there
Ere Ogier knew him ; there the squire did lead
The Ancient Knight, who still took little heed
Of all the things that by the way he said,
For all his thoughts were on the days long dead.

There in the painted hall he sat again,
And 'neath the pictured eyes of Charlemaine
He ate and drank, and felt it like a dream ;
And midst his growing longings yet might deem
That he from sleep should wake up presently
In some fair city on the Syrian sea,
Or on the brown rocks of the loadstone isle.
But fain to be alone, within a while
He gat him to the garden, and there passed
By wondering squires and damsels, till at last,
Far from the merry folk who needs must play,
If on the world were coming its last day,
He sat him down, and through his mind there ran
Faint thoughts of that day, when, outworn and wan,
He lay down by the fountain-side to die.
But when he strove to gain clear memory
Of what had happed since on the isle he lay
Waiting for death, a hopeless castaway,
Thought, failing him, would rather bring again
His life among the peers of Charlemaine,

OGIER THE DANE

And vex his soul with hapless memories ;
Until at last, worn out by thought of these,
And hopeless striving to find what was true,
And pondering on the deeds he had to do
Ere he returned, whereto he could not tell,
Sweet sleep upon his wearied spirit fell,
And on the afternoon of that fair day,
Forgetting all, beneath the trees he lay.

Meanwhile the Queen, affairs of state being done,
Went through the gardens with one dame alone
Seeking for Ogier, whom at last she found
Laid sleeping on the daisy-sprinkled ground,
Dreaming, I know not what, of other days.
Then on him for a while the Queen did gaze,
Drawing sweet poison from the lovely sight,
Then to her fellow turned, "The Ancient Knight—
What means he by this word of his?" she said ;
"He were well mated with some lovely maid
Just pondering on the late-heard name of love."

"Softly, my lady, he begins to move,"
Her fellow said, a woman old and grey ;
"Look now, his arms are of another day ;
None know him or his deeds ; thy squire just said
He asked about the state of men long dead ;
I fear what he may be ; look, seest thou not
That ring that on one finger he has got,
Where figures strange upon the gold are wrought :
God grant that he from hell has not been brought
For our confusion, in this doleful war,
Who surely in enough of trouble are

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

Without such help ; " then the Queen turned aside
Awhile, her drawn and troubled face to hide,
For lurking dread this speech within her stirred ;
But yet she said, " Thou sayest a foolish word ;
This man is come against our enemies
To fight for us." Then down upon her knees
Fell the old woman by the sleeping knight,
And from his hand she drew with fingers light
The wondrous ring, and scarce again could rise
Ere 'neath the trembling Queen's bewildered eyes
The change began ; his golden hair turned white,
His smooth cheek wrinkled, and his breathing light
Was turned to troublous struggling for his breath,
And on his shrunk lips lay the hand of death ;
And, scarce less pale than he, the trembling Queen
Stood thinking on the beauty she had seen
And longed for but a little while ago,
Yet with her terror still her love did grow,
And she began to weep as though she saw
Her beauty e'en to such an ending draw.
And 'neath her tears waking he oped his eyes,
And strove to speak, but nought but gasping sighs
His lips could utter ; then he tried to reach
His hand to them, as though he would beseech
The gift of what was his : but all the while
The crone gazed on them with an evil smile,
Then holding toward the Queen that wondrous ring,
She said, " Why weep'st thou ? having this fair thing,
Thou, losing nought the beauty that thou hast,
May'st watch the vainly struggling world go past,
Thyself unchanged." The Queen put forth her hand

OGIER THE DANE

And took the ring, and there awhile did stand
And strove to think of it, but still in her
Such all-absorbing longings love did stir,
So young she was, of death she could not think,
Or what a cup eld gives to man to drink ;
Yet on her finger had she set the ring
When now the life that hitherto did cling
To Ogier's heart seemed fading quite away,
And scarcely breathing with shut eyes he lay.
Then, kneeling down, she murmured piteously,
“ Ah, wilt thou love me if I give it thee,
And thou grow'st young again? what should I do
If with the eyes thou thus shalt gain anew
Thou shouldst look scorn on me ?” But with that word
The hedge behind her, by the west wind stirred,
Cast fear into her heart of some one nigh,
And therewith on his finger hastily
She set the ring, then rose and stood apart
A little way, and in her doubtful heart
With love and fear was mixed desire of life.

But standing so, a look with great scorn rife
The elder woman, turning, cast on her,
Pointing to Ogier, who began to stir ;
She looked, and all she erst saw now did seem
To have been nothing but a hideous dream,
As fair and young he rose from off the ground
And cast a dazed and puzzled look around,
Like one just waked from sleep in some strange place ;
But soon his grave eyes rested on her face,
And turned yet graver seeing her so pale,
And that her eyes were pregnant with some tale

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

Of love and fear ; she 'neath his eyes the while
Forced her pale lips to semblance of a smile,
And said, "O Ancient Knight, thou sleepest then?
While through this poor land range the heathen men,
Unmet of any but my King and Lord :
Nay, let us see the deeds of thine old sword."

"Queen," said he, "bid me then unto this work,
And certes I behind no wall would lurk,
Nor send for succour, while a scanty folk
Still followed after me to break the yoke :
I pray thee grace for sleeping, and were fain
That I might rather never sleep again
Than have such wretched dreams as I e'en now
Have waked from."

Lovelier she seemed to grow
Unto him as he spoke ; fresh colour came
Into her face, as though for some sweet shame,
While she with tearful eyes beheld him so,
That somewhat even must his burnt cheek glow,
His heart beat faster. But again she said,
"Nay, will dreams burden such a mighty head ?
Then may I too have pardon for a dream :
Last night in sleep I saw thee, who didst seem
To be the King of France ; and thou and I
Were sitting at some great festivity
Within the many-peopled gold-hung place."

The blush of shame was gone as on his face
She gazed, and saw him read her meaning clear,
And knew that no cold words she had to fear,
But rather that for softer speech he yearned.
Therefore, with love alone her smooth cheek burned ;

OGIER THE DANE

Her parted lips were hungry for his kiss,
She trembled at the near approaching bliss.

Nathless, she checked her love a little while,
Because she felt the old dame's curious smile
Upon her, and she said, "O Ancient Knight,
If I then read my last night's dream aright,
Thou art come here our very help to be,
Perchance to give my husband back to me;
Come then, if thou this land art fain to save,
And show the wisdom thou must surely have
Unto my council; I will give thee then
What charge I may among my valiant men;
And certes thou wilt do so well herein,
That, ere long, something greater shalt thou win:
Come, then, deliverer of my throne and land,
And let me touch for once thy mighty hand
With these weak fingers."

As she spoke, she met
His eager hand, and all things did forget
But for one moment, for too wise were they
To cast the coming years of joy away;
Then with her other hand her gown she raised
And led him thence, and o'er her shoulder gazed
At her old follower with a doubtful smile,
As though to say, "Be wise, I know thy guile!"

But slowly she behind the lovers walked,
Muttering, "So be it! thou shalt not be balked
Of thy desire; be merry! I am wise,
Nor will I rob thee of thy Paradise
For any other than myself; and thou
May'st even happen to have had enow

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

Of this new love, before I get the ring,
And I may work for thee no evil thing."

Now ye shall know that the old chronicle,
Wherein I read all this, doth duly tell
Of all the gallant deeds that Ogier did,
There may ye read them; nor let me be chid
If I therefore say little of these things,
Because the thought of Avallon still clings
Unto my heart, and scarcely can I bear
To think of that long, dragging, useless year,
Through which, with dulled and glimmering memory,
Ogier was grown content to live and die
Like other men; but this I have to say,
That in the council chamber on that day
The Old Knight showed his wisdom well enow,
While fainter still with love the Queen did grow
Hearing his words, beholding his grey eyes
Flashing with fire of warlike memories;
Yea, at the last he seemed so wise indeed
That she could give him now the charge, to lead
One wing of the great army that set out
From Paris' gates, midst many a wavering shout,
Midst trembling prayers, and unchecked wails and tears,
And slender hopes and unresisted fears.

Now ere he went, upon his bed he lay,
Newly awakened at the dawn of day,
Gathering perplexéd thoughts of many a thing,
When, midst the carol that the birds did sing
Unto the coming of the hopeful sun,

OGIER THE DANE

He heard a sudden lovesome song begun
'Twixt two young voices in the garden green,
That seemed indeed the farewell of the Queen.

SONG

HÆC

*In the white-flowered hawthorn brake,
Love, be merry for my sake ;
Twine the blossoms in my hair,
Kiss me where I am most fair—
Kiss me, love ! for who knoweth
What thing cometh after death ?*

ILLE

*Nay, the garlanded gold hair
Hides thee where thou art most fair ;
Hides the rose-tinged hills of snow—
Ah, sweet love, I have thee now !
Kiss me, love ! for who knoweth
What thing cometh after death ?*

HÆC

*Shall we weep for a dead day,
Or set Sorrow in our way ?
Hidden by my golden hair,
Wilt thou weep that sweet days wear ?
Kiss me, love ! for who knoweth
What thing cometh after death ?*

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

ILLE

*Weep, O Love, the days that flit,
Now, while I can feel thy breath;
Then may I remember it
Sad and old, and near my death.
Kiss me, love ! for who knoweth
What thing cometh after death ?*

Soothed by the pleasure that the music brought,
And sweet desire, and vague and dreamy thought
Of happiness it seemed to promise him,
He lay and listened till his eyes grew dim,
And o'er him 'gan forgetfulness to creep
Till in the growing light he lay asleep,
Nor woke until the clanging trumpet-blast
Had summoned him all thought away to cast :
Yet one more joy of love indeed he had
Ere with the battle's noise he was made glad ;
For, as on that May morning forth they rode
And passed before the Queen's most fair abode,
There at a window was she waiting them
In fair attire with gold in every hem,
And as the Ancient Knight beneath her passed
A wreath of flowering white-thorn down she cast,
And looked farewell to him, and forth he set
Thinking of all the pleasure he should get
From love and war, forgetting Avallon
And all that lovely life so lightly won ;
Yea, now indeed the earthly life o'erpast

OGIER THE DANE

Ere on the loadstone rock his ship was cast
Was waxing dim, nor yet at all he learned
To 'scape the fire that erst his heart had burned.
And he forgot his deeds, forgot his fame,
Forgot the letters of his ancient name
As one waked fully shall forget a dream,
That once to him a wondrous tale did seem.

Now I, though writing here no chronicle
E'en as I said, must nathless shortly tell
That, ere the army Rouen's gates could gain
By a broad arrow had the King been slain,
And helpless now the wretched country lay
Beneath the yoke, until the glorious day
When Ogier fell at last upon the foe,
And scattered them as helplessly as though
They had been beaten men without a name :
So when to Paris town once more he came
Few folk the memory of the King did keep
Within their hearts, and if the folk did weep
At his returning, 'twas for joy indeed
That such a man had risen at their need
To work for them so great deliverance,
And loud they called on him for King of France.

But if the Queen's heart were the more a-flame
For all that she had heard of his great fame,
I know not ; rather with some hidden dread
Of coming fate, she heard her lord was dead,
And her false dream seemed coming true at last,
For the clear sky of love seemed overcast

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

With clouds of God's great judgments, and the fear
Of hate and final parting drawing near.

So now when he before her throne did stand
Amidst the throng as saviour of the land,
And she her eyes to his kind eyes did raise,
And there before all her own love must praise ;
Then did she fall a-weeping, and folk said,
"See, how she sorrows for the newly dead !
Amidst our joy she needs must think of him ;
Let be, full surely shall her grief wax dim
And she shall wed again."

So passed the year
While Ogier set himself the land to clear
Of broken remnants of the heathen men,
And at the last, when May-time came again,
Must he be crowned King of the twice-saved land,
And at the altar take the fair Queen's hand
And wed her for his own. And now by this
Had he forgotten clean the woe and bliss
Of his old life, and still was he made glad
As other men ; and hopes and fears he had
As others, and bethought him not at all
Of what strange days upon him yet should fall
When he should live and these again be dead.

Now drew the time round when he should be wed,
And in his palace on his bed he lay
Upon the dawning of the very day :
'Twixt sleep and waking was he, and could hear
E'en at that hour, through the bright morn and clear,
The hammering of the folk who toiled to make

OGIER THE DANE

Some well-wrought stages for the pageant's sake,
Though hardly yet the sparrows had begun
To twitter o'er the coming of the sun,
Nor through the palace did a creature move.

There in the sweet entanglement of love
Midst languid thoughts of greater bliss he lay,
Remembering no more of that other day
Than the hot noon remembereth of the night,
Than summer thinketh of the winter white.

In that sweet hour he heard a voice that cried,
"Ogier, Ogier!" then, opening his eyes wide,
And rising on his elbow, gazed around,
And strange to him and empty was the sound
Of his own name; "Whom callest thou?" he said;
"For I, the man who lie upon this bed,
Am Charles of France, and shall be King to-day,
But in a year that now is passed away
The Ancient Knight they called me: who is this,
Thou callest Ogier, then, what deeds are his?
And who art thou?" But at that word a sigh,
As of one grieved, came from some place anigh
His bed-side, and a soft voice spake again,
"This Ogier once was great amongst great men;
To Italy a helpless hostage led;
He saved the King when the false Lombard fled,
Bore forth the Oriflamme and gained the day;
Charlot he brought back, whom men led away,
And fought a day-long fight with Carahau.
The ravager of Rome his right hand slew;
Nor did he fear the might of Charlemaine,
Who for a dreary year beset in vain

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

His lonely castle ; yet at last caught then,
And shut in hold, needs must he come again
To give an unhoped great deliverance
Unto the burdened helpless land of France :
Denmark he gained thereafter, and he wore
The crown of England drawn from trouble sore ;
At Tyre then he reigned, and Babylon
With mighty deeds he from the foemen won ;
And when scarce aught could give him greater fame,
He left the world still thinking on his name.

“ These things did Ogier, and these things didst thou,
Nor will I call thee by a new name now
Since I have spoken words of love to thee—
Ogier, Ogier, dost thou remember me,
E'en if thou hast no thought of that past time
Before thou camest to our happy clime ? ”

As this was said, his mazed eyes saw indeed
A lovely woman clad in dainty weed
Beside his bed, and many a thought was stirred
Within his heart by that last plaintive word,
Though nought he said, but waited what should come.
“ Love,” said she, “ I am here to bring thee home ;
Well hast thou done all that thou cam'st to do,
And if thou bidest here, for something new
Will folk begin to cry, and all thy fame
Shall then avail thee but for greater blame ;
Thy love shall cease to love thee, and the earth
Thou lovest now shall be of little worth
While still thou keepest life, abhorring it.
Behold, in men's lives that so quickly flit

OGIER THE DANE

Thus is it, how then shall it be with thee,
Who some faint image of eternity
Hast gained through me?—alas, thou heedest not!
On all these changing things thine heart is hot—
Take then this gift that I have brought from far,
And then may'st thou remember what we are;
The lover and the loved from long ago."

He trembled, and more memory seemed to grow
Within his heart as he beheld her stand,
Holding a glittering crown in her right hand:
"Ogier," she said, "arise and do on thee
The emblems of thy worldly sovereignty,
For we must pass o'er many a sea this morn."

He rose, and in the glittering tunic worn
By Charlemaine he clad himself, and took
The ivory hand, that Charlemaine once shook
Over the people's heads in days of old;
Then on his feet he set the shoes of gold.
And o'er his shoulders threw the mantle fair,
And set the gold crown on his golden hair:
Then on the royal chair he sat him down,
As though he deemed the elders of the town
Should come to audience; and in all he seemed
To do these things e'en as a man who dreamed.

And now adown the Seine the golden sun
Shone out, as toward him drew that lovely one
And took from off his head the royal crown,
And, smiling, on the pillow laid it down
And said, "Lie there, O crown of Charlemaine,
Worn by a mighty man, and worn in vain,

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

Because he died, and all the things he did
Were changed before his face by earth was hid ;
A better crown I have for my love's head,
Whereby he yet shall live, when all are dead
His hand has helped." Then on his head she set
The wondrous crown, and said, "Forget, forget !
Forget these weary things, for thou hast much
Of happiness to think of."

At that touch

He rose, a happy light gleamed in his eyes ;
And smitten by the rush of memories,
He stammered out, "O love ! how came we here ?
What do we in this land of Death and Fear ?
Have I not been from thee a weary while ?
Let us return—I dreamed about the isle ;
I dreamed of other years of strife and pain,
Of new years full of struggles long and vain."

She took him by the hand and said, "Come, love,
I am not changed ;" and therewith did they move
Unto the door, and through the sleeping place
Swiftly they went, and still was Ogier's face
Turned on her beauty, and no thought was his
Except the dear returning of his bliss.

But at the threshold of the palace-gate
That opened to them, she awhile did wait,
And turned her eyes unto the rippling Seine
And said, "O love, behold it once again !"
He turned, and gazed upon the city grey
Smit by the gold of that sweet morn of May ;
He heard faint noises as of wakening folk
As on their heads his day of glory broke ;

OGIER THE DANE

He heard the changing rush of the swift stream
Against the bridge-piers. All was grown a dream,
His work was over, his reward was come,
Why should he loiter longer from his home ?

A little while she watched him silently,
Then beckoned him to follow with a sigh,
And, raising up the raiment from her feet,
Across the threshold stepped into the street ;
One moment on the twain the low sun shone,
And then the place was void, and they were gone
How I know not ; but this I know indeed,
That in whatso great trouble or sore need
The land of France since that fair day has been,
No more the sword of Ogier has she seen.

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

SUCH was the tale he told of Avallon,
E'en such an one as in days past had won
His youthful heart to think upon the quest ;
But to those old hearts nigh in reach of rest,
Not much to be desired now it seemed—
Perchance the heart that of such things had dreamed
Had found no words in this death-laden tongue
We speak on earth, wherewith they might be sung ;
Perchance the changing years that changed his heart
E'en in the words of that old tale had part,
Changing its sweet to bitter, to despair
The foolish hope that once had glittered there—
Or think, that in some bay of that far home
They then had sat, and watched the green waves come
Up to their feet with many promises ;
Or the light wind midst blossom-laden trees,
In the sweet Spring had weighted many a word
Of no worth now, and many a hope had stirred
Long dead for ever.

Howsoe'er that be
Among strange folk they now sat quietly,
As though that tale with them had nought to do,
As though its hopes and fears were something new.
But though, indeed, the outworn, dwindled band
Had no tears left for that once longed-for land,
The very wind must moan for their decay,

AUGUST

And from the sky, grown dull, and low, and grey,
Cold tears must fall upon the lonely field,
That such fair golden hopes erewhile did yield;
And on the blackening woods, wherein the doves
Sat silent now, forgetful of their loves.
Yet, since a little life at least was left,
They were not yet of every joy bereft,
For long ago was past the agony,
Midst which they found that they indeed must die;
And now well-nigh as much their pain was past
As though death's veil already had been cast
Over their heads—so, midst some little mirth,
They watched the dark night hide the gloomy earth.

END OF VOL. II

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